**Fair isn’t Always Equal**

**Chapter one**

In chapter one of *Fair isn’t always equal,* we get into how differentiation looks in the classroom and how teachers can incorporate it into their lessons. Differentiation is very important in the classroom setting. Without teachers are not allowing themselves to be the best they can be. It also limits the students and does not allow them to be the best they can be. Differentiation means understanding the needs and supports of students, and implementing these into to the classroom. By tailoring lessons to students needs it allows them to better understand the material and allows them to feel more comfortable in the classroom.

Differentiation does not mean giving students easy work so that they are guaranteed to get a good grade. It means understanding that every student is different and require different supports. It could be something as simple as explaining a concept a different way for a student, or allowing a student to get up and walk around while they work on a problem. Differentiation does not mean that the students are not being challenged, it means that they are being challenged appropriately for them. By doing this teachers are able to better help the student understand material that is needed while also preparing them for the next step in the education.

By allowing students to succeed by changing one idea that is easily changed, classrooms will be happier place for everyone involved. Teachers especially can breathe a sigh of relief when it comes engaging students in the classroom. Where teachers normally feel overwhelmed with how they will get students excited in the material, they now have a concrete way of helping achieve this.

**Chapter two**

In chapter two of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, we think about what it means to actual master a concept rather than just memorizing information. The different being when someone has mastered a concept they truly understand it in a way that once they are tested on it they will not forget the information simply because they cannot. Some teachers are ok with students not mastering information. If they are able to produce the information on a test then they must know the information. This is not always the case though, it can be easy for a student to memorize information, take a test and move on with their life. They most likely will not remember the information in years to come, or even in months to come. This can prove to be problem some because students are not retaining the information.

It is a teacher’s responsibility to determine what constitutes as mastery. Instead of simply taking a standard test and getting a standard score, what will the teacher do to ensure that students actually understand the information. They must come up with a new way of assessing students, one that does not allow them to simply memorize for a test and then forget the information. A student’s mastery of a subject is going to be key in further education. There are certain concepts that are needed for a student to move on. For example if a student does not master the idea of addition, they will not be able to understand multiplication or any further mathematics.

**Chapter three**

In chapter three of *Fair isn’t always equal,* we learn about the importance of assessment and the different types of assessments. There are three types of assessments, all equally important. By starting with the last assessment, the summative assessment, we understand what the ultimate goal is. Where we want students to eventually end up, so we can then decide the best way to get students there. Once we have the summative assessment we can then design the pre-assessment, and the formative assessment. Both of these latter assessments are also important in the learning process. Pre-assessments allow us to see where our students are stating and somethings we may need to spend additional time on. The formative assessments allow us to keep up with our students and ensure they are learning the material.

One thing I found very interesting and that I could incorporate into my classroom is giving students the final test of a unit at the beginning. This way they will know ahead of time what is going to be expected of them and help them better focus and understand the material. By changing some of the numbers I would then be able to use the same test that the students have become accustomed to over the unit. In math I think the formative assessments are especially important. It is very easy for a student to fall behind on a concept, and then not be able to catch up because they need that concept to move on. By using formative assessments to ensure that students are grasping each concept it will allow students to confidently move on to the next topic.

**Chapter four**

In chapter four of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal* we look at the three main types of assessments. Portfolios, rubrics, and self-assessment are all very important and useful tools for a teacher to utilize. A portfolio allows students to collect their work over a set timeframe and put it all together in one piece. This makes it easier for students to see the progression that they have made over this time period and helps them reflect on what they have learned. It also allows students to be creative and show their personality by designing the portfolio their selves. While portfolios are very useful in the classroom, I don’t see myself using them very often in the math classroom. I don’t think a portfolio is the right type of assessment for that setting and it could be confusing for students.

Rubrics are a huge part of communicating with students what is expected of them. It is important that if a teacher is going to have a rubric that it be clear and concise, and truly state what the teacher wants. Rubrics can be very helpful for students if they are done correctly, however a poorly written rubric can be very bad for a student while doing any type of assignment. I am the type of person who enjoys knowing exactly what is expected of me so I do think I will use rubrics quite often in my classroom.

Self-assessment allows a teacher to see how a student is thinking and what their thoughts on their progress is. This can be very helpful because it allows a student to be honest and teacher can see if there are areas the student needs to work on or if a particular subject that they are struggling in. Because there are so many concepts in math I see myself using self-assessment frequently so students can reflect on themselves.

**Chapter five**

In chapter five of Fair Isn’t Always Equal, the main focus is tiering assessments for students. Tiering assessments means tailoring assignments to meet the need of the students and to ensure that a student is challenged just the right amount. While there may sometimes simply be a assignment a,b, and c, each with a different difficult, this may not always be true. It is important to make sure that assignments fit appropriately with the difficulty that a student needs.

There are many different strategies that can be used to tier the assignments. However before thinking about what the different assignments should be, teachers should first observe their students and decide which students may need a less difficult assignment and which students may need a more challenging assignment. Once a teacher has a good grasp on what their students and need and how they will separate the assignments, they can then think about the actual assignments. In a math classroom one thing I may do if I were teaching how to solve linear equations, is have the students who need a less difficult assignment work on equations with only one variable. While students who need more of a challenge can work on equations that have variables on both sides. In both cases the equations would gradually get harder to challenge the students.

One of the keys to tiering is ensuring that the assignments are truly designed for the students so they are able to get the most out of the lesson. If tiering is done correctly it can be an excellent tool for teachers to use to better help their students.

**Chapter six**

In chapter six of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, we learn about what makes a test question good. This is a very important topic because the way a question is phrased or just the nature of the question can mean the difference between a student passing or not. There are many different types of questions and each one has a time and place as to when it should be used. It is important for teachers to carefully think about their tests and create tests that will best evaluate student knowledge while also being clear and concise. If questions are short answer questions, teachers need to be aware of many things when asking the question. They need to keep in mind how they ask the question, is it clear what they want students to do, and what they are trying to say. It is best to keep the questions short, especially if a test is timed, students need to focus on answering the questions rather than spending a lot of time reading length questions.

For multiple choice questions or true or false questions one thing to keep in mind is patterns. Patterns may naturally appear, but teachers need to be sure that they do not have a set pattern that students can figure out and answer questions correctly when they don’t truly know the answer. It is also a good idea to include similar answers or commonly mistaken answers.

In a math classroom most of the questions will be solving equations, however it is important to have a variety of questions to better help students understand the material and to better ensure that they actually know the material.